

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 4, 2016

The Honorable William C. Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472

Re: Request for Private Property Debris Removal Action in the City of Tybee Island, Georgia

Dear Administrator Fugate:

We write to express support for approval of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency's application on behalf of the City of Tybee Island for Private Property Debris Removal action following Hurricane Matthew (FEMA-4284-DR-GA).

44 CFR § 206.224 states upon determination that debris removal is in the public interest, the Regional Administrator may provide assistance for the removal of debris and wreckage from publicly and privately owned lands and waters. Such removal is in the public interest when it is necessary to: (1) Eliminate immediate threats to life, public health, and safety; or (2) Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property; or (3) Ensure economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large.

We are increasingly concerned that debris piles in these communities pose a threat to public health. Such piles provide nesting areas for rodents and potential breeding grounds for mosquitoes. In addition, they provide shelter for mosquitoes from insecticide sprays and impede local mosquito control authorities from combatting the spread of disease. With confirmed reports of Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) in Georgia and the increasing threat of the Zika virus, the health of Tybee Island residents and visitors may be put unnecessarily at risk by lingering piles of debris.


The accumulated debris blocking right-of-ways is also impeding the City of Tybee Island's ability to provide essential services equally to all residents. These essential services – such as law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency medical services – require safe and adequate access for first responders to all properties within the city, including those on private roads. The risk to public health and safety due to lack of access will only increase over time if the debris is not removed.

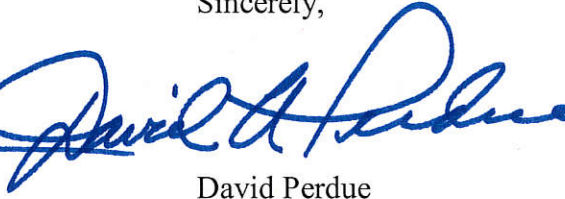
The growing economic impact caused by the delayed removal of debris is of particular concern to Tybee Island, which depends on the tourism industry and the 2.5 million visitors it hosts annually. The decaying piles of organic and anthropogenic debris are not only visual eyesores, but also a source of increasing levels of odors, vermin, and mosquitos. The presence of these


debris piles is noxious to tourists and projects a false image of disarray in a community that is open for business.

As a result, we request you carefully consider GEMHSA's application on behalf of the City of Tybee Island and approve Private Property Debris Removal. The effect of Hurricane Matthew had already imposed a heavy burden on Tybee Island. The threats to public health and safety as well as delayed economic recovery caused by these debris piles threaten to further compound that damage. We believe timely federal assistance will significantly assist all Tybee Island residents in their recovery efforts.

Sincerely,


Johnny Isakson
United States Senator


David Perdue
United States Senator


Earl L. "Buddy" Carter
Member of Congress

cc: Mr. Warren Riley, DR-4284 Federal Coordinating Officer
Mr. Jason Buelterman, Mayor, City of Tybee Island